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COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK IN AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS.

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
AND STATE AGRICULTURAL COLLEGES
COOPERATING.

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BOYS' AND GIRLS' CLUB WORK.

CARE AND FEEDING OF CHICKS.

Prepared by the Animal Husbandry Division, Bureau of Animal Industry, United States Department of Agriculture.

The proper brooding of chickens is one of the most difficult operations on many poultry farms, especially for the beginner. Many poultry keepers who are able to secure good egg yields and fair hatches make a failure of brooding chickens, either in raising only a small percentage of the chickens hatched or in failing to rear strong, vigorous birds which develop into good breeding stock. Brooding is still in the experimental stage, and no one system has given perfect satisfaction.

REARING CHICKENS WITH HEN.

Sitting hens should be confined to slightly darkened nests at hatching time and not disturbed unless they step on or pick their chickens when hatching, in which case the chickens should be removed as soon as dry to a basket lined with flannel or some other warm material, and kept near a fire until all the eggs are hatched; or the eggs may be removed and placed under a quieter hen whose eggs are hatching at the same time. An incubator may also be used to keep the earliest hatched chickens warm, in case they are removed from the nest. If the eggs hatch unevenly, those which are slow in hatching may be placed under other hens, as hens often get restless after a part of the chickens are out, allowing the remaining eggs to become cooled at the very time when steady heat is necessary. Remove the egg shells and any eggs which have not hatched as soon as the hatching is over. Hens should be fed as soon as possible after the eggs are hatched, as feeding tends to keep them quiet; otherwise many hens will leave the nest. In most cases it is best that the hen remain on the nest and brood the chickens for at least 24 hours after the hatching is over.

DUSTING THE HEN.

The hen should be powdered with a good insect powder before moving her and the chickens to the brood coop. She should be dusted every two weeks, or as often as necessary until the chickens are weaned. If lice become thick on the chickens, or if they are troubled with "head lice," a very little grease, such as lard or vaseline, may be applied with the fingers on the head, neck, under the wings, and around the vent. Great care should be taken, however, not to get too much grease on the chickens, as it will stop their growth and in some cases may prove fatal.

CARE OF THE BROOD COOP.

The brood coop should be cleaned at least once a week and kept free from mites. If mites are found in the coop, it should be thoroughly cleaned and sprayed with kerosene oil or crude petroleum. From 1 to 2 inches of sand or dry dirt or a thin layer of straw or fine hay should be spread on the floor of the coop. Brood coops should be moved weekly to fresh ground, preferably where there is new grass. Shade is very essential in rearing chickens, especially during

warm weather; therefore the coops should be placed in the shade whenever possible. A corn-field makes fine range for young chickens, as they secure many bugs and worms and have fresh ground to run on most of the time, owing to the cultivation of the ground, and have abundant shade at the same time.

TOE PUNCHING CHICKS.

Toe punch or mark all the chickens before they are transferred to the brooder or brood coop, so that their age and breeding can be readily determined after they are matured. Farmers frequently keep old hens on their farms and kill the younger hens and pullets, because they are unable to distinguish between them after the pullets have matured.

CONFINING THE HEN.

The hen should be confined in the coop until the chicks are weaned, while the chickens are allowed free range after they are a few days old. Where hens are allowed free range and have to forage for feed for themselves and the chicks, they often take them through wet grass, where the chicks may become chilled and die. Most of the feed the chicks secure in this manner

goes to keep up the heat of the body, whereas feed eaten by those that are with a hen that is confined produces more rapid growth, as the chicks do not have so much exercise. Then, too, in most broods there are one or two chicks that are weaker than the others, and if the hen is allowed free range the weaker ones often get behind and out of the hearing of the mother's cluck and call. In most cases this results in the loss and death of these chicks. If the hen is confined the weaklings can always find shelter and heat under her, and after a few days may develop into strong, healthy chicks (see figs. 1 and 2).



FIG. 1.—Do not allow the hen and chicks unlimited range.

feeding five times daily than by feeding three times daily, but it should be borne in mind that more harm can be done to the young chickens by overfeeding than by underfeeding, and at no time should they be fed more than barely enough to satisfy their appetites and to keep them exercising, except at the evening or last meal, when they should be given all they will eat. Greater care must be exercised not to overfeed young chicks that are confined than those that have free range, as leg weakness is apt to result in those confined.

The young chicks may be fed any time after they are 36 to 48 hours old, whether they are with a hen or in a brooder. The first feed may contain either hard-boiled eggs, johnnycake, stale bread, pinhead oatmeal, or rolled oats, which feeds or combinations may be used with good results. Mashies mixed with milk are of considerable value in giving the chickens a good start in life, but the mixture should be fed in a crumbly mass and not in a sloppy condition. After the chickens are two months old they may be fed four times daily, and after three months

FEEDING YOUNG CHICKENS.

Young chickens should be fed from three to five times daily, depending upon one's experience in feeding. Undoubtedly chickens can be grown faster by

old three times daily, with good results. Johnnycake composed of the following ingredients in the proportions named is a very good feed for young chicks: One dozen infertile eggs or 1 pound of sifted beef scrap to 10 pounds of corn meal; add enough milk to make a pasty mash, one tablespoonful of baking soda, and bake until done. Dry bread crumbs may be mixed with hard-boiled eggs, making about one-fourth of the mixture eggs, or rolled oats may be used in place of the bread crumbs. Feed the bread crumbs, rolled oats, or johnnycake mixtures five times daily for the first week, then gradually substitute for one or two feeds of the mixture finely cracked grains of equal parts by weight of cracked wheat, finely cracked corn, and pin-head oatmeal or hulled oats, to which about 5 per cent of cracked peas or broken rice and 2 per cent of charcoal, millet or rape seed may be added. A commercial chick feed may be substituted if desired. The above ration can be fed until the chicks are two weeks old, when they should be placed on grain and a dry or wet mash mixture.

After the chicks are 10 days old, a good growing mash, composed of 2 parts by weight of bran, 2 parts middlings, 1 part corn meal, 1 part low-grade wheat flour or red-dog flour, and 10 per cent sifted beef scrap, may be placed in a hopper and left before them at all times. The mash may be fed either wet or dry; if wet, only enough moisture (either milk or water) should be added to make the feed crumbly, but in no sense sloppy. When this growing mash or mixture is not used a hopper containing bran should be accessible to the chickens at all times.

When one has only a few chickens it is less trouble to purchase the prepared chick feeds, but where a considerable number are reared it is sometimes cheaper to buy the finely cracked grains and mix them together. Many chick feeds contain a large quantity of grit and may contain grains of poor quality, so that they should be carefully examined and the quality guaranteed before they are purchased.

As soon as the chickens will eat the whole wheat, cracked corn, and other grains, the small-sized chick feed can be eliminated. In addition to the above feeds the chickens' growth can be hastened if they are given sour milk, skim milk, or buttermilk to drink. Growing chickens kept on a good range may be given all their feed in a hopper, mixing 2 parts by weight of cracked corn with 1 part of wheat, or equal parts of cracked corn, wheat, and oats in one hopper and the dry mash for chickens in another. The beef scrap may be left out of the dry mash and fed in a separate hopper, so that the chickens can eat all of this feed they desire. If the beef scrap is to be fed separately it is advisable to wait until the chicks are 10 days old, although many poultrymen put the beef scrap before the young chickens at the start without bad results. Chickens confined to small yards should always be supplied with green feed, such as lettuce, sprouted oats, alfalfa, or clover, but the best place to raise chickens successfully is on a good range where no extra green feed is required. Fine charcoal, grit, and oyster shell should be kept before the chickens at all times, and cracked or ground bone may be fed



FIG. 2.—Confine the mother hen in a brood coop until the chicks are weaned.

where the chickens are kept in small bare yards, but the latter feed is not necessary for chickens that have a good range.

NOTE.—This is one of a series of follow-up circulars (the K series) printed for the exclusive use of club members and club leaders. Other persons desiring poultry literature should write to their State agricultural college or ask for bulletins noted below.

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 A System of Poultry Accounting. (Bureau of Animal Industry Circular 176.) Price, 5 cents.

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